



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PART V

THE DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT

Since the city cannot afford to permit its citizens to live sub-normal lives, it is the business of the government to leave no stone unturned in dealing with unemployment. It has already been pointed out that the appropriations of public money for relief purposes can be justified only in extreme distress.

MUNICIPAL WORK

The feeling that the city government should, if possible, relieve unemployment, coupled with the idea that the city could expand its income at will has led many to assume that public work should be used to fill up the low points of employment in private work. It is argued that city work should be saved up until such times as it will tend to fill the gaps in employment. Unquestionably, it is the duty of the municipality, as well as other branches of government, to do this so far as possible. However, so far as the municipality is concerned, the value of public work as a means of meeting unemployment has been very greatly exaggerated. Practically the only work which the city can, to any extent, pile up, is its contract work. But the amount of money annually spent by Philadelphia for city contracts is small. In 1914, the value of contract work done for the city was about \$12,000,000. Of this, over \$2,000,000 was appropriated for services which must be performed regularly through the year—such as street cleaning, garbage, ash collection, etc. Of the remaining contracts, representing only \$10,000,000, one-half is spent to purchase supplies of various kinds—chiefly coal, lumber, and groceries. While, undoubtedly, the hastening of purchases of public supplies would be of help in creating employment during periods of stress, and should be done as one of the best ways the city government can help, yet its influence will be but slight. Of the remaining \$5,000,000, the majority consists of paving, resurfacing and similar work, which can not readily be done in winter when employment is most serious. Only a small part of the city work, such as the clearing up of the meadows in South Philadelphia for park use and building the

bulkheads along the Schuylkill, can be done in winter. If \$1,000,000 worth of contract work could be saved annually to be done at emergency periods it could not, after materials had been bought, furnish employment to 15,000 persons for a month even at low rates. It would furnish little, if any, more employment than would be furnished during a year by a firm with 700 employees. It must furthermore be considered that a majority of the unemployed are persons whose sex, previous work, environment or physical incapacity make them unable to do the heavy out-door construction work that the city would chiefly have to offer. Even without taking into account the difficulty of doing many kinds of city work in the middle of winter, the minor value of municipal work as a means of meeting serious unemployment, is apparent. Obviously, one employing concern, even though it be the city government, can do little to handle the unemployment problem of the 50,000 employing concerns in Philadelphia. It is folly to comfortably delude ourselves into believing that a better distribution of municipal work affords a solution to our entire problem.

Despite this fact, however, a fundamental obligation *does* rest upon the legislative and executive branches of the city government to regard and make use of everything in municipal work which may affect unemployment. As much public work as is possible should be done at times when business is slack, but under the *usual business conditions*. Their fifty years' experience in dealing with unemployment has taught European countries that simon-pure relief employment, *i.e.*—work especially made to furnish employment and conducted at low efficiency, and with little set standard of efficiency, is bad policy, save as a last resort. "Relief" work, as such, is more costly to the city than work done under normal conditions, despite the economy advantage frequently claimed because of lower wages and cheaper materials. The policy usually characteristic of relief work—that of paying a wage from one to ten times as great as that actually earned—is as degrading and degenerating in its effect on the jobless man as is the mere hand-out of funds. Relief work is still further to be objected to on the grounds that, by providing no standard of competence, it opens an easy way for a corrupt administration to justify endlessly its own excessive expenditure and avoid the proper safeguards of the civil service law. Finally, relief work, even if capable of suc-

cessful administration, is inadequate since it deals only with the resultant human suffering without touching the industrial disorganization responsible for it.

Therefore, whatever contribution the municipality makes by supplying public work should be done under the normal or approximately normal business methods.

With these conditions imposed, a municipal policy, which will reserve public work not of a pressing nature until the time of emergency, and which will assure the rapid starting of such work when needed, should be adopted by each successive incoming administration.

In addition to this the municipality can assist by doing many things of a minor nature which will assist in solving the unemployment question.

Just as any individual employer has an obligation (not always possible to attain) to furnish steady employment the year round, so should the municipality adopt the policy of all-the-year-round work for strictly municipal employes. This policy has been adopted in Wellesley, Mass.

The city should see to it that work and employment given out by such a tremendous construction operation as the building of the new subway system, should be doled out as regularly as possible. When that work draws to a close, it should taper down gradually so that an army of thousands of men should not be thrown on the city at once and the city's industries expected to absorb them instantly, as was the case in the building of the New York subway system.

Finally, the municipality should have some place, perhaps a new municipal farm with quarry attached, where residents of Philadelphia, who are unable to find work, can be temporarily employed after the public employment bureau has granted a certificate of character and worthiness. During the past winter, many men were found, in order to secure assistance from the city, to have had themselves committed to the House of Correction. Many of these were doubtless looking for a warm place without too much tiresome muscular activity. However, many were perfectly sincere in their desire for work. There is no reason why the city should not have a separate farm with a quarry attached which would help supply municipal needs. To this farm, citizens of

Philadelphia, capable of doing hard out-door work, could be admitted upon certificate of the public employment bureau, without stigma of disgrace, and work at a normal degree of efficiency and at a wage which would not encourage the permanency of such an occupation. Some limit should be placed on the length of time a person might be allowed to remain at such a farm.

A MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT BUREAU

One of the most obvious duties of the city government is the establishment of a municipal employment bureau. The primary function of such a bureau would be to assist in bringing men out of work into quick and easy communication with employers needing help. At present the responsibility for finding a new job rests almost entirely upon the man out of work. With little or no systematized help for the worker, the well-known hope-killing, degenerating process of hunting a job results. Under existing conditions the need for such a bureau as a labor clearing house is very real. It should be recognized that the ideal and eventual solution is, not to have men change their jobs no matter how cheaply or efficiently, but to have them remain steadily employed in their present jobs. The present chaotic condition of labor turnover in most factories has accentuated the present need and exaggerated the ultimate value of public employment bureaus.

At present, the man out of work seeks a new position through one or more of five chief methods.

1. Inserting and answering newspaper ads.
2. Applying to the business agent of his union.
3. Applying at a private employment bureau or at the employment bureau conducted by organizations of employers in certain trades.
4. By means of introductions by friends.
5. By tramping the streets, applying at random.

The inadequacy of these methods for meeting the whole situation is almost too obvious to point out. If the man out of work answers newspaper ads, he is apt to find that he has arrived too late, or that as a result of the vagueness of the newspaper description, he has applied for a job for which he is not fitted. To insert an advertisement involves an expense that cannot well be stood by

the person unemployed and is frequently not justified by results. Members of unions which include in their membership a high percentage of the trade, are in a much better position to be assisted to a new work if there is any. The fact is, however, that but a small percentage of the wage-earners belong to unions, and the majority are, therefore, not in a position to profit by the union activities. The man out of work can use a private employment bureau, but each of these covers only a small corner of its particular field, so that it may or may not know where there is a suitable job. Moreover, if he secures a position, the applicant must pay a fee ranging from \$1 up. Even if no job is forthcoming, a fee of 50 cents is usually charged. Finally, the private employment bureaus make little analysis of positions with a view to fitting the men accurately so that satisfaction and permanence of employment shall be assured.

Applying at random for work, or where "help wanted" signs announce the need for new help frequently means a hope-killing, all-day hunt for a job that does not exist or else it means walking all around a job without finding it. The business of finding jobs is so unsystematic that hunting work, in a large percentage of cases, is very much like a game of "blind man's buff," with the hunt extending all over the city and even farther.

The stories of one day's experiences told by an employe selected at random in an Axminster carpet mill, show how extravagant, discouraging and inefficient are the prevailing means of seeking work and how immeasurably superior it would be if all, or as much as possible of the work of job-hunting, could be centralized in one free public employment bureau—which should be a great labor clearing house for the entire city. This man, who was young and unmarried and a day laborer, had been employed at the ——— hat factory. In the middle of February he was laid off with 24 others because of a lack of work. He remained unemployed till Easter. He was told that he would be taken on at the hat factory when times were better. The new employer gave him a good recommendation as to ability and steadiness. He reports that he had enough "rainy day" money saved up so that it lasted during his period of unemployment. He described one day's travel in search for a job as follows:

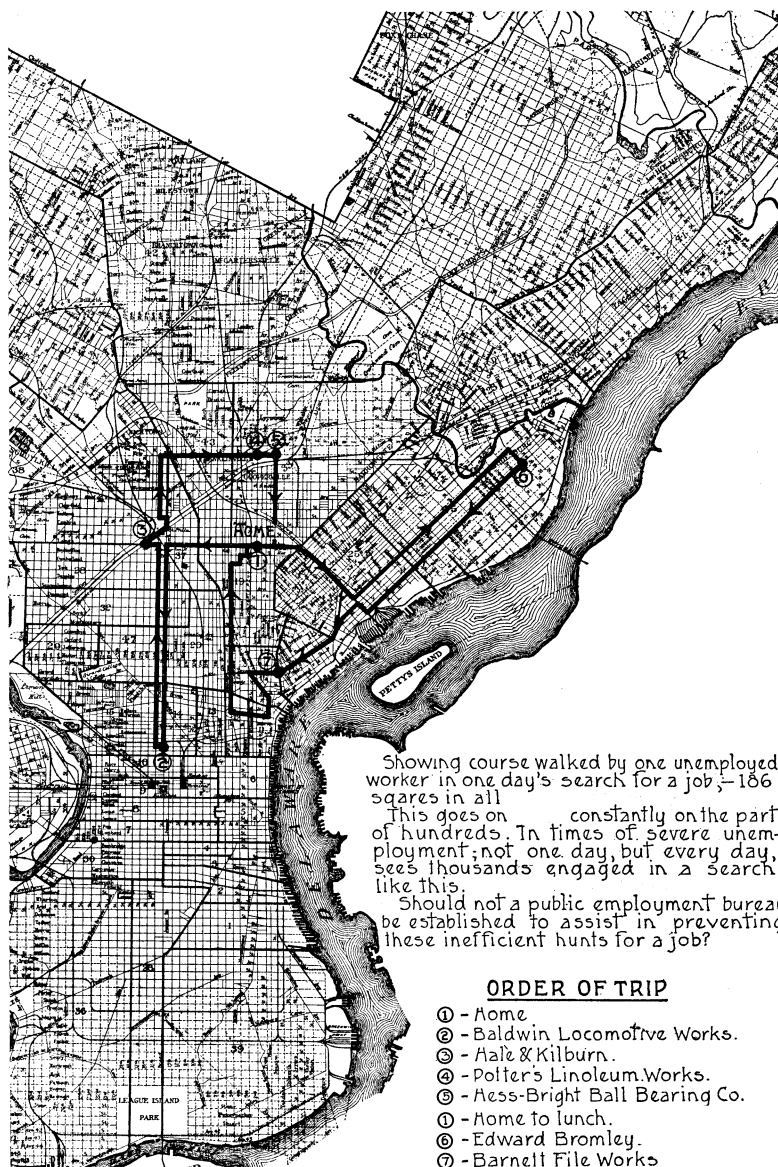
I got up at 5.30 and went to Baldwin's and was told no help was required. From there, I went to Hale & Kilburn at 18th and Lehigh Avenue and met with the same answer. I then walked to 2d and Erie Avenue to Potter's Oil Cloth Works, and they needed no help. Then to the Hess Bright Company, at Front and Erie Avenue, and again met with the same result. Next I came back home at 2d and Lehigh Avenue for a meal. In the afternoon, I went to Edward Bromley's; no help needed; from there to a firm at American and Girard Streets, with the same result. Then I called at the Barnett File Works, again with the same result. I tried two other places in the neighborhood, whose names I have forgotten, and none had any work. Often I would go out and after meeting with bad luck day after day, would say to myself at night, "the job has got to find me," but the next morning I would feel differently about it.

In all this man walked approximately 186 squares in this one day. The path covered by this man this day is shown in fig 26.

The function of a public employment bureau should not be interpreted, as it frequently is, as a cure for unemployment. It does not create jobs. Only in indirect roundabout ways does it tend to cure unemployment. It can, however, greatly improve the situation of the unemployed by effecting quickly and cheaply the transition from one job to another. When the business of securing work for idle workers shall have been concentrated in public employment bureaus to the degree which it is in Germany, the dispiriting, aimless, inefficient hunt for a job by thousands of individual unemployed workers should be a thing of the past.

The bureau should bring about a "dovetailing" between industries which require similar kinds of labor and in which the "off-season" of one corresponds with the "on-season" of another, as in the case mentioned (on page 88) of the printing concern and a department store. Such a plan would assure the retention of skilled workers by the firm and contribute to continuity of employment.

In other ways, the bureau can cooperate with employers to reduce the irregularity of employment in certain industries. The extreme irregularity of employment among Philadelphia's 4,000 dock workers has already been indicated. The unemployment arising from the over-crowding of the dock working trade in Liverpool has been largely reduced by an agreement entered into by the stevedores and shipping concerns and the public employment bureau. This agreement provides for common clearing houses along the docks from which firms employing such labor secure their



Showing course walked by one unemployed worker in one day's search for a job;—186 squares in all

This goes on constantly on the part of hundreds. In times of severe unemployment; not one day, but every day, sees thousands engaged in a search like this.

Should not a public employment bureau be established to assist in preventing these inefficient hunts for a job?

ORDER OF TRIP

- ① - Home
- ② - Baldwin Locomotive Works
- ③ - Hale & Kilburn.
- ④ - Polter's Linoleum Works.
- ⑤ - Hess-Bright Ball Bearing Co.
- ⑥ - Home to lunch.
- ⑥ - Edward Bromley.
- ⑦ - Barnett File Works

help. When a call for workers comes, the officials of the clearing houses choose those who have been longest in the trade, all other things being equal. Thus an automatic limitation (as well as certain other artificial limitations) is placed on the entrance of newcomers into the trade. This reduces the over-crowding and consequent unemployment among dock workers. Some similar plan would be of advantage to Philadelphia. The public employment bureau should work out the details of such a scheme and secure the coöperation of employers and the large share of government support necessary for such a plan.

The Philadelphia employment bureau should be more than an employment bureau. It should be the official headquarters for the community's steady fight against unemployment. Its records and experience would constantly throw light on the problem. This information should be published and freely distributed to every agency that is interested in the subject.

The bureau should coöperate with educational institutions, giving advice, etc. The institutions in turn would help forward the investigation, and dissemination of facts about unemployment.

A future department of the bureau should be especially concerned with the question of vocational guidance of young people. An efficient employment bureau would be so intimately conversant with the conditions of the labor market in each trade and with the qualities required of the worker for success in that trade that it should be able to offer and should maintain facilities for giving advice to young people about to enter industry and older persons who contemplate shifting from one trade to another. In conjunction with the Vocational Training Department of the Board of Education, information regarding the opportunity or lack of opportunity, as well as the requirements of particular trades, should be published in pamphlet form for the benefit of teachers, parents and others in a position to advise young persons about to enter industry. The need for work of this kind can be illustrated by the situation in the lace business. Here, despite the fact that the 300 or 400 lace weavers now in the business are a much larger number than the industry can keep anywhere near busy, there are approximately 100 boys and young men who, either as formal apprentices or in some other capacity, are now in line, hoping to enter the lace weavers' trade.

Since progress in reducing unemployment will necessarily be slow—as one man puts it—“will last us a thousand years”—Philadelphia should look forward to the adoption, on either a state or city basis, of some form of insurance for wage-earners against unemployment—such as is in vogue in many of the countries of Europe. In essence, this simply means that the government, the employer and the employe shall contribute so much per week to a common fund from which certain sums shall be paid out to those insured when unemployed. This insurance fund is usually administered by the public employment bureaus who offer work first, if it is available. The function of administering unemployment insurance will fall upon the local bureau. This insurance cannot, however, be practically adopted until after the labor market has been organized and the procuring of jobs sufficiently centralized in the bureau. This is necessary so that the bureau may be in a position to ascertain that there really is no work before unemployment insurance shall be granted.

A committee of the American Association of Labor Legislation, working in conjunction with the State Department of Labor and Industry and the Department of Public Works, secured the passage in June, 1915, of laws providing for a state system of public employment bureaus. One of the functions of this system of public employment bureaus is the regulation of private employment bureaus. By the terms of these acts, provision is made for the establishment and operation of a public bureau in any city by the joint authority of the city and state. Plans are now on foot for the establishment of such a joint bureau in Philadelphia. As soon as Councils convene in the fall of 1915, an ordinance should be introduced authorizing the coöperation of the city authorities. In fact, the state has already started such a bureau. It is desired that the federal department of immigration, which now supports a public employment bureau in Philadelphia, can be induced to join in to help make one large bureau in Philadelphia, thus avoiding needless duplication of work.

It is hoped that by thus joining the efforts of three government agencies in the support of one bureau, a common error and cause of failure in public employment bureaus shall be avoided—namely, insufficient funds to secure men of capability as superintendents, and to prosecute properly the duties of the bureau. Two

other requirements for an ideal bureau, which are, however, frequently overlooked, are (1) a central location, on the first floor and with plenty of space, and (2) the choosing of employes under civil service rule.

A MUNICIPAL LODGING HOUSE

A suggestion commonly made is that the city should support a municipal lodging house. An additional permanent lodging house in Philadelphia is unnecessary since the Philadelphia Branch of the Society for Organizing Charity (up to the summer of 1915) permanently supports one wayfarers' lodge, at which 175 homeless men can find shelter and food in return for a small amount of work. In addition to this, two missions offered floors where homeless men could "flop" during the past winter. Up to this spring, the Society for Organizing Charity maintained two lodges with a total capacity of 275. On only a few nights during the severe winter just past were these lodges filled to capacity. The existence of one (the smaller one has been closed) of these lodges leads to the conclusion that an additional permanent municipal lodging house would simply encourage and attract those of the unemployed who are neither willing nor able to work. However, prevalent practice and opinion in the larger cities of the country recommends that such lodges for homeless men should be taken over by the city, in toto, from the private charities. This would make possible better regulation and higher standards in such work. In times of unusual stress, whenever the facilities of the lodges of the Society for Organizing Charity should become entirely inadequate, the city should make provisions for the supplying of temporary accommodations, as a number of business men headed by H. T. Saunders did this past winter, and just as did New York City when its regular municipal lodging house became inadequate. Provision for administering these temporary quarters might be made with some existing charities, if the work of furnishing accommodations to homeless men is left to the societies.

THE DUTY OF THE CONSUMER

The entire responsibility for dealing with unemployment cannot be shouldered off on to employers and the city government. Consumers should realize that by following extreme styles in clothes,

household furnishings, etc., they are making steady production difficult to the manufacturer, and are, therefore, contributing to unemployment.

They should also realize that when industry is slack, there rests upon the individuals the obligation to purchase as much and as widely as possible against future need, so that industry will be started up and employment again furnished. By "buying now," "hiring now," "repairing now," "building now," "cleaning up now," in slack times, both business firms, householders and individuals in general can contribute in the sanest way towards the relief of unemployment. A campaign along this line, similar to the Consumers' League "shop early" campaign, would be desirable. The Consumers' League is the logical agency to undertake such a campaign.

Employers should realize that the effect of every expenditure either for labor or materials in one firm or industry tends to spread and stimulate other industries whose improved prosperity reacts on the original firm or industry.